

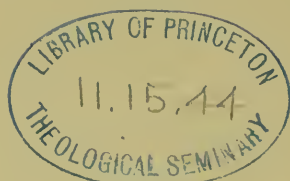
Frank L. Norton

An Historical Sermon
concerning the Church
Life of S. Stephen's Parish,
Lynn, Massachusetts.

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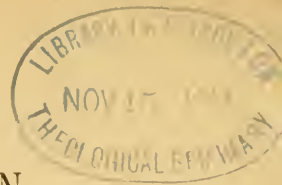


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AN HISTORICAL SERMON

CONCERNING THE

CHURCH LIFE OF S. STEPHEN'S PARISH,

LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS,

DELIVERED BY THE RECTOR,
THE REV. FRANK L. NORTON, D.D.,

On Sunday Morning, November 7th, 1886.

LYNN, MASS.:
PRESS OF THOS. P. NICHOLS, 24 MARKET ST.
1886.

"Ask now of the Days that are Past." — DEUT. 32. 2

AN HISTORICAL SERMON.

COMING to you one year ago to-day — upon the first Sunday in November, 1885 — your Rector naturally desired to know the history of the Parish from its beginning, and so determined to gather what material he could from contemporaneous history, from Convention Journals, from the Parish Registers, and from the reminiscences of those whose own lives have run parallel with that of the Parish. It would seem, at first sight, an easy task to “ask now of the days that are past,” but strangely enough, some of the Rectors left no records at all behind them. But the private memoranda of one of the first incorporators of the Parish have made good, for the purposes of the historian, these lapses in clerical duty. To ascertain the number of baptisms, confirmations, marriages and burials, together with the money contributed year by year for missions and charities, (since the organization of the Parish), the Rector has examined the Convention Journals from 1837 to the present day, and, fortunately, wherever a Rector has failed to make a report, the Bishop’s address has noted the number confirmed, or a faithful Warden has kept a note, or the good memory of a Mother in Israel has filled the gap. So that it is believed that the entire and correct statistics of Parish life and movement

are now collected for preservation. And here the Rector would record his grateful obligation to the Hon. Edward S. Davis and the Hon. James R. Newhall—to the one for valuable reminiscences, and for the use of the Convention Journals (a complete set of which he possesses), together with, perhaps, the widest and most accurate knowledge of the history of the Church in this Diocese, of any layman within it; and to the other, for matter which, as a successful journalist and well-known municipal historian, he so admirably imparts. From these, and like sources, the following brief history is gathered.

“Ask *now* of the days that are past,” and the answer comes, first, away back in 1819, sounding like the tinkling of a tiny mountain rill, which afterwards should broaden into a mighty river. A lad walking to Salem, and, sometimes, to Marblehead, attracted to the Church in those ancient cities, and always longing for the services in his own home town, was, as it seems to me, the tiny grain of mustard seed which has grown into the goodly tree; for he was the first person in Lynn who knew or cared anything for the Church—at least, sufficiently to make personal sacrifice for it. True, in 1819, some gentlemen attempted to form an organization, and services were held occasionally for two years, but it was a half-hearted enterprise, and, upon the Bishop’s advice, it was discontinued. But the young lad who loved the Church enough to walk to Salem for it, still kept the faith, and later on, when, in 1833, he had arrived at man’s estate, he invites a companion—a thoughtful youth—to accompany him, and the first time this companion entered the Church his tastes were gratified, his religious sense satisfied; and being a popular youth, his course was noticed. These two young men, Mr. Edward S. Davis and Mr. John Bowler, were

advised by Bishop Griswold to make an effort to start a church in Lynn, and he would supply the clergyman for the winter. In 1834, they called upon all whom they thought inclined to join them, and on November 27, of that year, Thanksgiving Day, Edward S. Davis, John Bowler, Alonzo Lewis, Richard A. Fleming and James Hilliker, met in an upper room — the old Liberty Hall, on the corner of Market and Essex streets, and resolved themselves into a Committee for the purpose of sustaining worship according to the rights and usages of the Protestant Episcopal Church. It was, indeed, “a day of small things.” As Lynn Common was the principal center, and sometimes playfully called, “the Court end of the town,” they desired to have the services there; so one of the Committee called upon the minister of the Congregationalists, the Rev. David Peabody, and asked for permission to hold Episcopal services in their house of worship. The minister replied that if the Trustees were willing, he, himself, would consent. Each Trustee was asked, and each gave his consent. This result was reported to the minister, who thereupon told the Committeemen that he would permit the use of the building (now the Second Universalist), provided they would not *read* prayers therein! Of course, it was impossible to accept the offer upon such terms, as the use of our incomparable Liturgy was the longed for privilege sought, and “*Common Prayer*” — not the intellectual meanderings of an individual however excellent — was the desire of this little flock. To the First Methodist Society, the Committeeman went and proffered the same request; and, without a moment’s hesitation, it was granted, and more than that — one of the Trustees offered to have the building prepared for the service, warmed and lighted. On the evening appointed, the Rev.

W. H. Lewis of Marblehead, assisted by the Rev. John A. Vaughn of Salem, and three or four Church people from that city, and as many from Lynn — to make the proper responses — held the first service of the new organization. The people turned out to witness this new thing, and it is related that Mr. Lewis made such an impression, that a year or two afterward, when he came again to officiate for the infant parish, they sent over to ask the Church to adjourn and meet with them and to invite Mr. Lewis to preach for them. The next service was held at the Town Hall, when Mr. Vaughn officiated, and the third at the Lynn Academy, before the close of 1834. On the first of January, 1835, regular services were begun at Liberty Hall, and continued with little interruption to nearly the end of the year, being served by various clergymen as they could be obtained, when the place of worship was removed to what had been Masonic Hall, which was fitted up for their use.

In January, 1836, the Rev. Milton Ward, M.D., became the first minister, and the Church was regularly organized under the name of Christ Church, its officers were chosen, and a Church edifice was erected during the year. It was built on North Common street, nearly opposite Church street, and on the 20th of July, 1837, it was consecrated. Bishop Griswold and a number of the Clergy (sixteen) met at the house of one of the Wardens. The dignified and imposing Prelate in his robes, and the vested Clergy in procession, marching across the Common — then all unfenced and open — was a spectacle new, indeed, to Lynn, but a glad and grateful one to eyes bedimmed with joyful tears that at last a Church was really built. At the entrance the Clergy were met by the two Wardens, Mr. Davis and Mr. Bowler, and so, proceeding up the center alley to the

chancel, they recited the 24th Psalm. How like a paean of victory must the words have sounded to those men who had toiled and suffered, and to the women who had wrought and prayed for this glad day. "Lift up your heads, O, ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in!"

Bishop Griswold's sermon was from the text *S. John II. 15.*

"And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables."

It was doubtless a discourse upon the preservation of God's House from all unhallowed uses. It was preached at a time when such counsel was sorely needed, when too little was known about the worship of God in any *beauty* of holiness. It is a quaint little programme, of half a century ago, that gives the order of that first Consecration Service, and but one copy is now known to be in existence. A quartette choir and a young organist from Salem furnished the simple music, and one of the Vestrymen, Alonzo Lewis, wrote the Consecration Hymn, and full it is of true poetry as well as rhythm. Among those clergy who took part in that Consecration Service, some attained great eminence in the Church; and most of them are fallen asleep. Dr. Stone, and Dr. Wainwright, afterwards, Bishop of New York, the saintly Dr. Edson, Dr. Vaughn and Dr. Lewis, Dr. Vail, Bishop of Kansas, and Dr. Howe, Bishop of Central Pennsylvania, and the great Dr. Croswell were in that procession, with their future greatness and usefulness before them. The local chronicler tells of the dinner at the house of Mr. Davis (now the Home for Aged Women) after the service, of the Evening Prayer, when Dr. Stone preached and the Bishop

ordained Mr. Alexander H. Cull to the Deaconate, this, with that of Mr. Jesse A. Penniman, being the only ordinations that have taken place in our Church; of the first baptism, July 16, 1837; and of the first confirmation, Feb. 19, 1838. The first marriage was that of the Senior Warden, and the second, that of the Junior Warden; while the first child born in the Church (1843), is, by the poetry of association, the beloved wife of the Senior Warden of to-day. Strangely enough reads the first official report to the Convention of 1837, and could the prophetic vision of those who struggled and prayed and denied themselves for the infant parish have rested upon the magnificent temple in which their children and, thank God, some of them also, are worshipping to-day, they would have declared that the age of miracles was by no means past. The record reads, that —

“This Parish has been in existence a little more than one year. It was formed principally out of new materials, and its original was quite small. They have, however, done well during the past year, in erecting a very neat and commodious Church edifice, which has just been completed, and opened with good promise of considerable accession to their strength. The number of those who are now about to commence worshipping here, cannot be immediately ascertained. Divine service was regularly sustained under the ministrations of the Rev. Mr. Ward, until April last. They have been continued since that time under their present minister, with the interruption of a few Sundays, occasioned by the loss of their old place of worship by fire” (Masonic Temple). “There have been a few constant and faithful attendants upon these services, and it is believed, not without spiritual benefit. The Communion has never been administered in this Parish; there are several connected with it who are ready and desirous to be confirmed, and

to come to the table of the Lord, at the first opportunity. A Sunday School has just been commenced in the new Church. There have been two infant baptisms and one burial. All contributions have gone towards defraying the expenses of the Society, and it is agreeable to say that the Church is completed with comparatively very little accumulation of debt. Their present minister is a missionary of the Massachusetts Episcopal Convocation.

[Signed] GEORGE WATERS, *Minister.*"

Two years later, the same clergyman remarks, "that this Parish labors under pecuniary embarrassments at home, we wish those to bear in mind who are called upon to contribute somewhat for its present support abroad; yet the present ratio of increase, and the circumstances of the place, certainly promise that it may, and will ere long, be able to stand upon its own foundation; and shall it not be the more induced, by remembrance of kindness received, to impart again of its own unto the destitute, to do as it has been done by? Such is the economy of Christian benevolence."

In the report of 1840 presented, in the absence of a resident minister, by the Senior Warden, he says that "the pecuniary difficulties which this Parish has labored under, from the commencement, have been, and continue, a great barrier to its success; and unless, in the providence of God, some way is opened, through which its liabilities may be discharged, we have strong fears for its existence."

After Mr. Waters went away, the Rev. Mr. Pollard remained for one year, and then so difficult was it to obtain a pastor, or to raise funds for his support, that services were suspended, although the organization was kept up. Finally, in

1844, several new residents of Lynn joined forces with the scattered remnant of the former Church and united under another name, and from September 20, 1844, this organization has been known as S. Stephen's Church. The names of the incorporators were Edward S. Davis, William H. Hubbard, Robert Farley, George M. Dexter, Edward D. Peters, Benjamin T. Reed, Edward S. Rand, William Foster Otis, Edward Codman, Robert Appleton and J. C. Brodhead. Services were at once begun with the Rev. George D. Wildes, afterwards the Rev. Dr. Wildes, as Rector, so well known in connection with the Church Congress as its accomplished Secretary. He served the Parish one year, and in his Convention report for 1844, gives the circumstances under which the present Parish was organized.

“It is well known that the Parish of Christ Church, consisting of but a few families, and laboring under the discouraging burden of a considerable debt, has had but a nominal existence for some years. The Church being held on mortgage by an individual (not a member of the Church), was leased by him, or others concerned, for various religious and secular purposes, and has been thus used, or vacant, for some four or five years. Meantime, those who were communicants, or otherwise attached to the worship of the Church, were scattered among the various denominations of the town, and the prospect of ever uniting them again in their household of faith and worship, had become but faint. God, however, in His providence saw fit, in this condition of the Parish, to raise up an instrument for its revival. Through the untiring exertions of a devoted and liberal Churchman of Boston, an attempt was made to free the Parish from the burden which had so long rested upon it, which eventually resulted in the redemption of the mortgage upon the

Church, and in the gathering together of the scattered members of the fold."

The Church property so redeemed was placed in the possession of the Bishop, together with two other gentlemen as trustees. A Sunday School of thirty scholars and five teachers was begun, the Church repaired and beautified, and a new era seemed to open before this Parish hitherto so sorely tried. The Rev. Isaac W. Hallam was Rector from February, 1846, to April, 1860. Mr. Hallam's pastorate of fourteen years was one of great usefulness—the Parish possessed itself of a good Rectory, wholly paid for, and the number of communicants increased from twenty-one to sixty, not yet a great growth, but it was a time of holding fast to what they had, and steadily, though slowly strengthening the Church's position in an uncongenial soil.

The Rev. Edward H. True, in 1860 came, with his earnest enthusiasm and good judgment, to take charge of the Parish, and his three years' pastorate saw an increase, in all respects, both in temporal and spiritual things. From 1863 to 1870, the Parish had for Rectors, in succession, the Rev. George S. Paine, the Rev. Gordon M. Bradley, and the Rev. Benjamin W. Attwell. In July, 1870, the Rev. Edward L. Drown, D.D., became the Rector, and remained until July, 1875. The strongest element in Dr. Drown's administration was his earnest pulpit utterances. His preaching won many to the Church, and, through it, to the Master's service, and many of his sermons are remembered, with profit, to-day, by those who listened to them in those years gone by.

In January, 1876, the Rev. Louis DeCormis became Rector

of S. Stephen's Parish, and, with one exception, his was the longest pastorate in its history. Coming, in all the freshness of his young manhood, he gave to it nearly ten years of service, during which time the number of communicants increased from two hundred and seventy-five to four hundred; and he inaugurated the Choir of men and boys, which is, to-day, the boast and pride of our Parish — a Choir, the members of which give their services, a free-will offering to God — and under the direction of Mr. Edward K. Weston, render chants, hymns and anthems in a manner that needs no encomium from me, for their praise is in all the churches; while to the beloved and able Organist and Choir Master, this Parish owes a debt of earnest gratitude, and his Rector is glad to place on record here, to-day, his own loving appreciation of his good friend's work, and his personal loyalty to himself.

But Mr. DeCormis had what few such young pastors have, the great satisfaction of watching from corner-stone to cross-crowned tower, the building of a Church, which for beauty, richness of design and perfection of detail, has few equals among the parish Churches of the land. To him, the present incumbent owes much in the very perfect record kept of official acts — the register being a thing of beauty, and a model to all parishes and all priests — and for the kind and brotherly letters which first welcomed him to the work, and afterward congratulated him and the people upon the completion of the Chime of Bells, for which the late Rector himself had seen the necessity and the fitness, but as everything could not be done at once, this crowning and completing joy was reserved for the next incumbent and his first year's work.

To the Hon. Enoch R. Mudge the Parish owes a debt in

the gift of this superb Church, the interest upon which can best be paid by them in keeping it, as they do, so exquisitely cared for that dust anywhere seems a profanation; and by adding, from time to time, as they have, objects of beauty and articles of usefulness, and to maintain the dignity and beauty of the now almost incomparable service.

Not to weary you with dry statistics, I desire to record here, very briefly, for preservation, these records. From 1837 to 1886 inclusive, there have been —

Baptisms,	.	.	.	.	781
Confirmations,	.	.	.	.	421
Marriages,	.	.	.	.	284
Burials,	.	.	.	.	438

Offerings, exclusive of the cost of the Church and

Rectory,	.	.	.	.	\$86,507.77
The Cost of the Church,	.	.	.	.	250,000.00
The value of the Rectory,	.	.	.	.	15,000.00

Making the expenditures of money during the
half century of parish life, . . . \$351,507.77

One year ago to-day the present Pastor preached his first sermon as your Rector. It has been a year of great happiness to him, for the people have been more than responsive to his suggestions—they have anticipated the needs of the Church, and have supplied them. To him and to his family they have been all that a kind and gracious Parish could be, and God has surely blessed this union of Pastor and people, both in spiritual and in temporal things. There have been eighty-one baptisms, fifty-three confirmations, seventeen marriages and twenty-one burials; and during the conventional year the offerings have amounted to \$12,245.

Much of the church work has been ably shared by the assistant minister of the Parish, the Rev. E. B. Schmidt, to whom the people extended a cordial reception early in June; and among the many pleasant occasions of the year was the entertainment afforded by the Choir in the Parish House, when the people gathered to bid the Curate welcome, and to enjoy the good cheer which was made possible by the generous and gracious help of a member* of the Parish, whose constant thoughtfulness has often made happy his Rector, and the choristers, who have ever been his chiefest care.

The tablet, erected in the porch at the tower entrance, records the story of the bells placed there by a grateful Parish to the glory of the Triune God, and in memory of him who gave the church to us. The beautiful chancel furniture—the Bishop's chair, the Rector's stall—within the rail, are gracious memorials to departed worth and loveliness. The one† will ever bring to mind a dear servant of God, whose aged eyes beheld her children placed in a home, where “Grandma's room” was always the centre toward which every home-coming tended; and when at last she fell asleep upon her Saviour's breast, her children rose up and called her “blessed”; and the other‡ is the gift of one who is ever his Rector's helper; and commemorates his *other self*—the sweet and gentle wife, whose early entrance into life eternal made earth poorer, as it made paradise richer for her coming; one whose character is indelibly stamped, thank God, upon her children, whose blessed heritage is the memory of that gentle mother's life. And to-day, used for the first time in the celebration of the Holy Communion, is a paten

* Mr. W. H. Berry.

† Presented by Mrs. J. C. Bennett, in memory of her mother.

‡ Presented by Mr. Joseph B. Breed, in memory of his wife.

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